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Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-02 PA-01

PRS-01 USIA-06 /049 W
---------- 124106
R 201648Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1901
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
FAA BRUSSELS
CINCUSAFE
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3440

PARIS FOR FAA
MONTREAL FOR ICAO

E.0. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, SP, ICAO, MO
SUBJ: MOROCCAN INTERFERENCE IN CANARY ISLANDS AIR TRAFFIC

1. SPANISH AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (ATC) AUTHORITIES WERE INFORMED MAY 13 AT 7:18 PM SPANISH TIME BY MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES THAT AIRCRAFT ENTERING THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR) OF CASABLANCA, WHICH INCLUDES THE CANARY ISLANDS, COULD DO SO AT ONLY FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERVALS. TO GIVE PERSPECTIVE TO THIS ORDER, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN ENTERING AND LEAVING THAT FIR AT LESS THAN ONE MINUTE INTERVALS. THE ORDER APPLIED NOT ONLY TO THE FIR BUT ALSO TO THE UIR (UPPER INFORMATION REGION), I.E., AIRCRAFT FLYING ABOVE 20,000 FEET. THE CASABLANCA FIR COVERS A WIDE REGION OF THE EASTERN ATLANTIC INCLUDING THE ROUTE BETWEEN THE CANARIES AND EUROPE, SO THAT THE ORDER HAD THE EFFECT OF CONSIDERABLY
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DELAYING AIR TRAFFIC, OF SPANISH AND SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES'

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AIRCRAFT SERVING THE CANARIES.

2. FOR AIRCRAFT ALREADY EN ROUTE, THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WAS TO PASS OVER THE LISBON OR AZORES FIRS. HOWEVER, BOTH OF THE LATTER, ACCORDING TO SPANISH AIR MINISTRY AUTHORITIES, HAVE LONG BEEN GROSSLY OVERWORKED. THEY HAVE OFTEN HAD TO ASK THEIR SPANISH COLLEAGUES TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRAFFIC WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE PASS OVER PORTUGAL, SENDING THAT TRAFFIC INSTEAD OVER SPAIN.

3. SPANISH AUTHORITIES AT FIRST THOUGH THE MEASURE WAS MERELY A TECHNICAL ONE SO THAT AIRPORT COMMANDER AT CANARY ISLANDS QUERIED HIS COLLEAGUES AT CASABLANCA, ACCORDING TO

WELL-ESTABLISHED SOP'S BETWEEN SPAIN AND MOROCCO. THERE WAS NO ANSWER. SEVERAL OTHER TELEXES AND TELEPHONE CALLS ELICITED NO RESPONSE UNTIL A MESSAGE REQUESTING EXPECTED LENGTH OF THIS MEASURE BROUGH FORTH REPLY THAT IT WAS "FOREVER."

4. COMMANDER OF AIRPORT AT CANARY ISLANDS THEN INFORMED HEAD OF IATA (INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION) CONFERENCE WHICH HAPPENED TO BE MEETING THERE 12-16 MAY, OF SITUATION AND NOTED THAT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF DELEGATES TO THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THOSE RULES. IATA REP THEN WIRED ICAO (INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION) IN MONTRAEL AND ON FIRDYA, 16 MAY, AT 8:00 A.M. SPANISH TIME, THE MEASURE WAS LIFTED.

5. SPANISH AIR MINISTRY OFFICIALS QUERIED BY EMBOFF COMPLETELY AT LOSS UNDERSTAND REASON FOR THIS MOROCCAN MOVE. THEY INDICATED THAT FIR CENTERS LIKE CASABLANCA HAVE RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY TO MODIFY TRAFFIC THROUGH REGIONS FOR WHICH RESPONSIBLE, ALTHOUGH THESE MODIFICATIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOR EXCLUSIVELY TECHNICAL REASONS. IN THEIR VIEW, THE MOVE HAD NO RATIONAL EXPLANATION TECHNICALLY SPEAKING. SOME OF THESE OFFICIALS THOUGHT IT COULD WELL HAVE BEEN A SIMPLE MISTAKE.

6. COMMENT: INCIDENT HAS SO FAR RECEIVED ONLY FRAGMENTARY TREATMENT IN SPANISH PRESS, WHICH, HOWEVER, INCLINED TO VIEW MOROCCAN RESTRICTIONS AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.
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STABLER

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Draft Date: 20 MAY 1975
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750178-1207
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